

## Module 2 Lesson planning and use of resources for language teaching

### Part 1 Planning and preparing a lesson or sequence of lessons

#### Unit 18 Identifying and selecting aims

##### ■ How do we identify and select aims?

**Aims** are what we want learners to learn or be able to do at the end of a lesson, a **sequence** (i.e. a series) of lessons or a whole course. Aims may focus, for example, on a **function** or a **grammatical structure**, on the vocabulary of a particular topic or on developing a language **skill**. Aims, especially for younger learners, may not always focus on particular areas of language. The aim of a lesson may also be listening to a story for pleasure or encouraging a positive attitude towards the foreign language. To identify and select the most appropriate aims, we need to ask ourselves two questions:

What do my learners already know?

What do they need to know?

The answers to these questions will help us to make sure that the aims are the right ones for a particular group of learners at a particular time.

##### ■ Key concepts

Look at the table. Can you work out what the difference is between main aims, subsidiary aims and personal aims?

<i>Main aim</i>	<i>Subsidiary aims</i>	<i>Personal aims</i>
To practise making polite requests in the context of making holiday arrangements. Example <b>exponent</b> : <i>Could you give me some information about hotels?</i>	Grammar: to revise modal auxiliary verbs. Functional exponents: <i>Could/Would you ...?</i> Vocabulary: to consolidate <b>lexis</b> for travel, accommodation. Phonology: to focus on <b>intonation</b> . Speaking: to give controlled oral practice.	To improve my organisation of the whiteboard; to give clearer examples.

A **main aim**, like the one above, describes the most important thing we want to achieve in a lesson or sequence of lessons. For example, we may want learners to understand and practise using new language; to **reinforce** or **consolidate** (i.e. to make stronger) the use of language they already know by giving them further practice; or to revise language they have recently

learnt. On a lesson plan the main aim should also include an example of the target language we are planning to teach.

As well as a main aim, a lesson may also have **subsidiary aims**. Subsidiary aims show the language or skills learners must be able to use well in order to achieve the main aim of the lesson. In the example on page 86, the main aim is to practise making polite requests; the subsidiary aims describe the language and skill that learners will need to make these requests. Stating both main and subsidiary aims is a good way of making sure that our lesson plan focuses on what we want our learners to learn, or to be able to do. It enables us to see how the lesson should develop, from one **stage** (or part) to the next, building up our learners' knowledge or skills in the best possible order.

In addition to learning aims for the learners, we may also want to think about our own personal aims as teachers. **Personal aims** show what we would like to improve or focus on in our own teaching. Like the ones in the table on page 86, these might be about improving the way that we handle aids and materials or particular teaching techniques, or they might be about our relationship with the learners. Here are some more examples:

- to try different correction techniques
- to remember to check instructions
- to write more clearly on the blackboard/whiteboard
- to make more use of the **phonemic chart** (a poster with **phonemic symbols**)
- to get learners to work with different partners
- to get quieter learners to answer questions.

Identifying and selecting aims are the first steps in planning a lesson. Once we have decided on the aims, we can design or select the most appropriate activities, put them in the best order and choose the most suitable **teaching aids** (things we can use to support our teaching in the classroom) and materials. After the lesson, we can look back at this part of the plan to see whether we have **achieved** our **aims**, i.e. whether we have succeeded in teaching what we planned to teach. This also helps us to select the most appropriate aims for future lessons.

## ■ Key concepts and the language teaching classroom

- The **syllabus** (i.e. the course programme) and/or the coursebook will give us a general direction for planning our teaching. To decide on specific aims for a particular lesson, however, we should think about our learners' needs and the stage they have reached in their learning.
- We can identify and select appropriate personal aims in a similar way, i.e. by looking back at earlier lessons we have taught and thinking about things that worked well and things we want to improve.
- We should not confuse aims and **procedures**. Aims describe what the learners will learn or what they will be able to do with the language, while procedures – for example, listening to a recording and answering questions about it – are what the teacher and learners will do at each stage of the lesson.
- Aims should not be too general. 'To teach the past simple' or 'to develop learners' reading skills' do not say enough about the purpose of the lesson. More specific aims might be 'to introduce and practise the past simple for talking about personal experiences' or 'to give learners practice in **predicting** content, **scanning** for specific information and guessing meaning from **context**'.

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- We shouldn't plan to do too much in a lesson. The amount we plan to cover will depend on the length of the lesson and the learners' level.
- Learners also need to know what the lesson is going to be about. It is often helpful to announce our aims (or to write them up on the board) at the beginning of the lesson, and/or to repeat them at the end.
- Learners of all ages find it helpful to know why they are doing things. For younger learners the aims of a lesson can be described in very simple language, focusing on the things they will do in the lesson and the language knowledge they will take away from it. (For example, 'Today we're going to read a story and learn how to describe people in English'.)

See Unit 19 for identifying the different components of a lesson plan, Unit 20 for planning an individual lesson or a sequence of lessons and Units 23–25 for the selection and use of materials, activities and aids.

### **FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY** (See page 173 for answers)

The procedures in the table below show a sequence of activities for a lesson with the main aim of developing intermediate students' confidence and skill in informal conversation. The subsidiary aims for the lesson (A–H) are in the wrong order. Put them in the right order so that they match the correct procedures.

Procedure	Subsidiary aims
1 Students move around the classroom to find students with matching halves of sentences.	A • to give students fluency practice • to practise using target language in a meaningful context
2 They talk in pairs about what they find difficult in listening to informal conversation.	B • to develop peer correction skills
3 They hear an informal conversation and identify speakers, place and situation.	C • to listen for detailed information • to focus students' attention on target language
4 They listen again and fill in missing phrases in the transcript.	D • to practise gist listening • to create a context
5 Repetition drill: students practise key phrases. Pairs practise simple two-line exchanges using key phrases.	E • to get students actively involved • to put students into pairs
6 Pairs write and practise their own conversation from role cards, using key phrases where possible. Several pairs perform and record conversations.	F • to give students confidence in speaking through controlled practice
7 Class comment and suggest improvements to grammar and vocabulary.	G • to review the whole lesson • to give the teacher feedback
8 Students discuss what they have learnt.	H • to raise awareness of what the lesson aim will be • to encourage personal involvement